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Agenda item 112 (e)
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 14 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly and, with reference to the note verbale dated 10 April 2006, has the honour to enclose herewith a document on Japan's voluntary pledges and commitments in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006 (see annex).

06-31539 (E) 210406

Annex to the note verbale dated 14 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Japan's voluntary pledges and commitments in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251

1. Japan's basic human rights policy

Japan adheres to the highest standards of human rights which are enshrined and guaranteed in its Constitution of 1947 that stipulates "fundamental human rights guaranteed to the people by this Constitution shall be conferred upon the people of this and future generations as eternal and inviolate rights." The Japanese Constitution further describes the desire of the Japanese people "to occupy an honoured place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth". Since the establishment of the Constitution, Japan has maintained a democratic political system and has developed policies for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Constitution. At the same time, Japan has been pursuing peace and prosperity in the international community.

Japan firmly believes that (a) human rights are universal, (b) all rights, including civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and (c) it is necessary to protect and promote them equally.

Japan also upholds a firm belief that human rights are the legitimate concern of the international community. In addressing specific situations, Japan fully recognizes the importance of an appropriate understanding of the history, culture, religion and traditions of the country in question. Based on this conviction, Japan has sought approaches tailored to each circumstance through dialogue, cooperation and assistance.

2. International commitments

(1) Japan has ratified the following international instruments for the protection and promotion of human rights and has made the utmost efforts to implement its obligations faithfully:

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1979)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1979)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1995)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1985)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1994) and its two Optional Protocols (2004 and 2005)
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1999)
- Geneva Conventions of 1949 (1953) and their Additional Protocols of 1977 (2004)
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1981) and its Optional Protocol (1982)

(2) Japan has been a member of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) since 1982 and has contributed to the work of CHR in a constructive and positive manner by emphasizing the importance of dialogue, tolerance and mutual respect.

(3) The Government of Japan has cooperated fully with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In November 2004, Japan invited the High Commissioner for Human Rights to have discussions on various issues relating to human rights with concerned authorities and civil society.

(4) Japan has cooperated with the special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights and invited various Mandates Holders to conduct dialogues.

3. Domestic human rights policy

(1) The Government of Japan has consistently made efforts and implemented concrete measures to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms in Japan. Recent examples include:

(a)To protect the rights of the child, the Government has improved and introduced new laws such as the revised Law for Punishing Acts Related to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and for Protection of Children (2004), the Law for Regulation of Acts Involving Children through the use of Internet Dating Services (2003), the revised Child Abuse Prevention Law (2004) and the revised Child Welfare Law (2004).

(b) In order to further promote gender equality, the Government has introduced the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society (1999) and the Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality (2005) following the Beijing+10 review.

(c) In order to combat human trafficking through protection of victims and the strengthening to law enforcement, in 2004, the Government has set up an Inter-ministerial Liaison Committee (Task Force) and adopted a Comprehensive National Action Plan of measures to combat trafficking in persons. Japan has also promoted international cooperation as an indispensable endeavor in resolving this issue.

(d) Human Rights Organs of the Ministry of Justice in charge of the nation's human rights protection activities conduct investigations on human rights infringement cases and take appropriate relief measures such as accusation, warning, conciliation if human rights infringements are confirmed. To strengthen the national human rights system, the Ministry of Justice has established human rights counseling offices with the cooperation of 14,000 human rights volunteers throughout the country.

(e) The Law concerning Penal Institutions and the Treatment of Sentenced Inmates was promulgated in May 2005. This law stipulates treatment aimed at sentenced inmates' correction and rehabilitation while respecting their human rights, the inspection mechanism administered by the Penal Institutions Inspection Committee, the new complaint mechanism and others. The Government of Japan had initiated a study for this legislation before the Human Rights Committee made recommendations, but the legislation consequentially addressed the issues raised by the Committee.

(2) In Japan, the right of assembly and association is guaranteed by the Constitution and any nonprofit organization can operate without restriction. As an indicator, 25,682 Nonprofit Organizations are registered under the Registration Law for Nonprofit Organization, for the purpose of obtaining corporate rights and tax concession measures.
(3) Japan guarantees freedom of expression: about 8,300 TV stations and 730 radio stations operate freely and independently; more than 50,000 independent newspapers are published in the country.

4. International cooperation
(1) Japan firmly believes that capacity building should constitute the main element in assisting efforts to improve the human rights situation. In its bilateral cooperation, Japan has assisted efforts to promote and protect human rights through projects to foster democratic governance, empower women and provide education, in close consultation with and based on the request by the governments concerned. The Government of Japan has held regularized bilateral dialogues on human rights with the governments of approximately 10 countries for the purpose of fostering mutual understanding and implementing bilateral technical assistance to advance the protection and promotion of human rights.
(2) Japan has supported and cooperated with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in building the capacities of national institutions and legal systems and also for developing human resources in the field of human rights. Japan has also contributed actively to the human rights related activities of other UN entities including UNIFEM and UNICEF.
(3) The Government of Japan has made efforts to promote the understanding and awareness of human rights related issues through organizing international conferences. The following are recent examples:

- The Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (2001)
- Symposium on International Humanitarian Law (2005)
- International Symposium on Trafficking in Persons (2006)

5. Commitments and pledges
(1) Japan would like to participate and work actively in the Council:

- by continuing to promote genuine dialogues and cooperation based on mutual understanding and respect;
- by addressing situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations;
- by promoting the establishment of an effective and efficient universal periodic review mechanism;
- by actively engaging in the discussion of the reform of the special mechanisms with a view to maintaining the highest standards of impartiality, objectivity, independence and expertise in fulfillment of their mandates;
- by contributing to the establishment of working methods and practices that maximize the effectiveness of the Council and maintain the transparency of the Council's work.

(2) Japan will continue bilateral dialogues on human rights and will continue to extend its technical cooperation to assist the efforts to improve the situation of human rights worldwide.

(3) The Government of Japan will:

- promote approval of the draft "International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances";
- continue to contribute actively to the early conclusion of the negotiations on an "International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" ;
- continuously support the activities of OHCHR. Japan supports the doubling of the regular budget of OHCHR;
- support the promotion of a human rights based approach in development programmes of the UN agencies.

(4) Japan will cooperate fully with the treaty bodies and actively participate in the discussion on the reform of the treaty bodies for a more effective monitoring system.

(5) Japan will work closely with civil society including non-governmental organizations in the promotion and implementation of human rights programmes.

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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 27 March 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to inform him that Switzerland has decided to put forward its candidacy for membership of the Human Rights Council during the election to be held at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, on 9 May 2006.

Switzerland warmly welcomed the establishment of the new Human Rights Council and intends to do everything in its power to ensure that the Council becomes a strong and effective body, capable of promoting and protecting all human rights everywhere in the world. As it has indicated on numerous occasions, it will make offices available to States not represented in Geneva which wish to participate in the work of the Council.

Respect for human rights is deeply rooted in Switzerland's traditions and in its Federal Constitution. Switzerland is fully committed to upholding the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights and continues to pursue at the national, regional and global levels an active human rights policy consistent with international law and following a rights-based approach.

While Switzerland never had the opportunity to sit on the Commission on Human Rights, it constantly contributed to the Commission's work in its capacity as observer. It took an active and constructive part in the negotiations leading to the adoption of resolution 60/251.

06-32083 (E) 280406 020506

Annex to the note verbale dated 27 March 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: French]

The Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to its note verbale dated 27 March 2006, in which it informed him that Switzerland had announced its candidacy for membership of the Human Rights Council.

In accordance with resolution 60/251, Switzerland has prepared a document outlining its efforts to promote human rights and the voluntary contributions and pledges it intends to make.

Switzerland would be grateful if the United Nations Secretariat would circulate this document and its enclosure (note verbale and pledges) as a document of the General Assembly.

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, English, French and Spanish]

Switzerland and the Human Rights Council

Voluntary pledges and commitments in accordance with Resolution 60/251

The Swiss Government undertakes to :

1. **Fully cooperate with the Human Rights Council in order to make it a strong, efficient and fair UN Human Rights body**

   - By actively participating in the work of the Council in a spirit of cooperation, inclusiveness and genuine dialogue and readiness to be submitted to the universal periodic review;
   - By ensuring effective responses to human rights violations wherever they occur and by contributing to the standard-setting work of the Council;
   - By engaging in a constructive reflection on the modalities and mandates of the Council as foreseen in Resolution A/RES/60/251, including the strengthening of the system of Special Procedures and other expert mechanisms of the Council;
   - By a strong commitment to the realisation of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, on an equal footing;
   - By seeking dialogue with non-members of the Council, regional organizations and civil society as well as improving the engagement of NGOs with the Council.

2. **Reaffirm its support to the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights and other relevant UN Funds, Programmes and bodies**

   - By continuing its close collaboration and dialogue with OHCHR and by maintaining at the moment the current level of financial support;
   - By promoting a human rights based approach to development in its support to UN operational activities and its engagement in the governing bodies of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNIFEM as well as WHO and FAO.
   - By working towards the better integration of human rights, transitional justice and rule of law activities in the work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and by organizing in 2006 a workshop about a study on "human rights and peace agreements".

- By contributing to the ongoing reform of the treaty body system and in particular by evaluating the usefulness of an expanded common core document complemented by specific reports to each of the treaty bodies;

- By developing and supporting the updating of a country-by-country "Human Rights Index", which is based on UN official documents and will be accessible to everybody as a useful reference and information tool.

3. **Advance human rights on an international level**

- By encouraging States who have not yet done so to ratify the core international human rights instruments;

- By supporting States in their implementation of human rights obligations through human rights dialogues, exchange of experts, technical cooperation and advice;

- By contributing through the Swiss development cooperation to the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and good governance in the majority of its partner countries;

- By contributing to the process of identifying and clarifying standards for corporate responsibility and accountability with regard to human rights and business.

4. **Advance human rights on a national level**

- By cooperating fully with the Special Procedures of the Council, including by upholding the standing invitation to all Special Procedures issued in April 2002 and facilitating all the necessary arrangements for their visits.

- By continuing to effectively implement its human rights obligations at federal and cantonal level, and to make every actor of society, i.e. the government, the private sector and civil society, aware of the need to respect human rights through information, training and awareness-raising.

- By examining the withdrawal of its reservations made to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as to the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- By ratifying in the near future the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (CRC-OP2), which Switzerland signed in 2000;

- By considering the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture, which Switzerland signed June 2004;

- By considering signing the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention;

- By ratifying in the near future the Additional Protocol III to the Four Geneva Conventions;

- By cooperating fully with the treaty monitoring bodies, including by submitting periodic reports on time, and acting promptly and in good faith on their concluding observations and recommendations.

Internet links to relevant Swiss official websites

Priorities of Swiss Human Rights Policy :

http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/e/home/foreign/humsec/humrig.html

- Human Rights report of the Swiss government 2000 :

http://www.admin.ch/ch/f/ff/2000/2460.pdf

- Human Rights and Development Cooperation :

http://www.sdc.admin.ch

- Switzerland and the United Nations :

http://www.eda.admin.ch/sub_uno/e/uno.html

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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 14 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Romania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of Romania to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the General Assembly and, in response to the note dated 4 April 2006 announcing Romania's candidature to the Human Rights Council, has the honour to present a document detailing Romania's contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights as well as its voluntary pledges and commitments in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 (see annex).

06-31650 (E) 210406

Annex to the note verbale dated 14 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Romania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Human Rights Council: Romania's voluntary pledges and commitments on human rights in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251

1. The Government of Romania has decided to present its candidature for the Human Rights Council, as a confirmation of its long-standing commitment to developing and strengthening the role of the United Nations in the universal promotion and protection of human rights.

2. Over the years, Romania has been actively involved in promoting the principles upheld by the UN, including through the dissemination of the ideals and universally accepted principles and norms enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant international human rights instruments.

3. Fully engaged in the efforts carried out universally to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms, Romania strongly supports all mechanisms and instruments aimed at the full and effective implementation and further development of international human rights law.

Romania has assumed the highest international standards in the area of human rights, becoming party to all the major regional and international treaties and protocols in the field of human rights, international humanitarian law and refugee law.

4. Up to the present, **Romania has ratified the most important universal treaties**, such as: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocols, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the four Geneva Conventions and the two Additional Protocols, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

5. The provisions of these treaties and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are directly **applicable within the Romanian legal framework**. Furthermore, in accordance with the Romanian Constitution, where **any inconsistencies occur** between the covenants and treaties on fundamental human rights Romania is a party to, and the national laws, **the international norms prevail**, unless the Constitution or the domestic legislation provides for higher standards of protection.

6. The Romanian authorities pay **constant attention to matters related to the implementation** of human rights norms. Over the last sixteen years, a thorough process of **reform** has been carried out in order to bring the national **legislation and institutional mechanism in full compliance** with the relevant international requirements. The **Romanian authorities and the civil society cooperate closely** in order to ensure the full implementation of these norms.

7. The opinions expressed by international fora, aiming at developing and reinforcing the human rights protection system within Romania, are highly valued, and their implementation is consistently pursued by the Romanian authorities. In accordance with this policy, Romania issued a **standing and open invitation to the mandate holders of all special procedures** of the Human Rights Commission. Some of them have already paid such visits (e.g. the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing – 2002; the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief – 2003; Special Rapporteur on the right to health -2004).

8. **Romania has accepted the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination under Article 14** of the relevant Convention and created a **National Council for Combating Discrimination – the first institution of this nature in Central and Eastern Europe**, whose main function is to ensure the implementation of the principle of equality among citizens, without interference from other public authorities.

9. The promotion of democracy, rule of law and human rights represents one of the most important objectives of the Romanian foreign policy. Romania will **continue to support actively any international organs and institutions** aiming at preventing and combating violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms, at developing existent standards, and at supporting Member States with the necessary assistance for the improvement of their human rights protection system.

10. **If elected**, Romania will work to make the **Human Rights Council** a **genuine contributor to the UN machinery** to promote and protect human rights and, in this respect, will strive to:

- Ensure that the new body will become a **powerful and effective** tool to be used, promptly and wherever need be, in the defense of human rights and fundamental freedoms, to be treated on the same footing and with the same emphasis;
- **Streamline and strengthen the mechanisms** represented by the Special Rapporteurs and other Special Procedures;
- Advocate for the establishment of a **peer-review** mechanism that provides for an **objective, accurate and balanced** analysis of the human rights situations in various countries;
- Promote **dialogue** between members of the Council and all UN member states, bearing in mind theirs national and regional particularities and various national, religious and cultural backgrounds, with the view to improving the **transparence** and to ensuring **inclusiveness** in the Council deliberations;
- Participate actively in the work of the Council, including with **initiatives** such as the resolutions co-sponsored by an great number of states from all regional groups, successfully adopted by the Human Rights Commission: "The promoting and the consolidation of democracy" (2000), "The ways and means to promote and consolidate democracy" (2001), "The interdependence between democracy and human rights" (2003), "Enhancing the role of the regional, sub-regional and other organizations and arrangements in promoting and consolidating democracy" (2004) and "Democracy and the rule of law" (2005),

- Encourage the **interaction** between Council and various components of the **civil society**, especially by stimulating **NGOs contributions** at various stages ;

11. The Romanian authorities remain **committed to contributing to the universal respect and implementation the highest standards and norms** in the field of human rights and, in this respect, undertakes to:

- Promote the **recognition and acceptance of the conclusions and recommendation of the global conferences** on human rights and related issues, including the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban in 2001;
- Encourage other states to become **parties to the main human rights treaties** and implement their provisions and, in this context, to finalize its domestic procedure of **ratification of the Optional Protocol** of the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Punishment and the ratification procedure;
- Participate actively in the debate over the **elaboration of new international legal instruments or improvement of the existing ones**, including by supporting the adoption of the draft International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance, the negotiation and an early approval of the draft of the Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities and the drafting of an additional Protocol to the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

12. Romania will contribute, through bilateral dialogue and using the network of regional and sub regional organizations and arrangements, to the promotion of **democracy, good governance and rule of law**, including in the Balkans and across the Black Sea;

13. Romania will strongly **back the efforts to strengthen the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**, including the doubling of its resources from the UN regular budget, in order to enable it to carry its functions more effectively. Romania will seek possibilities, to the best of its abilities, to make voluntary contributions to structures within the UN human rights system.

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Note verbale dated 3 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the United Nations and has the honour to inform it that the United Kingdom is standing for election to the United Nations Human Rights Council at the election to be held during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly on 9 May 2006.

The United Kingdom is committed to striving for the highest standards of human rights around the world. It believes that the United Nations plays a unique and vital role in the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide and that the establishment of the new Human Rights Council is a key opportunity further to develop that role.

The United Kingdom has been an active and committed member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and has been closely involved in human rights discussion across the board. The United Kingdom, through its foreign and development policies, seeks to provide practical support in the promotion of the full range of human rights: economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. If elected to the Human Rights Council, the United Kingdom will continue to strive for enhanced promotion and protection of human rights, and for further cooperation on human rights among all Member States of the United Nations and across the United Nations system.

The United Kingdom will shortly submit a specific set of pledges and commitments to underscore its own continuing commitment to human rights and how it will contribute to the work of the Council if elected.

06-31509 (E) 250406

Annex to the note verbale dated 3 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

Voluntary pledges and commitments of the United Kingdom on the Human Rights Council

1) Commitment to work in partnership to make the Council a success

The UK will participate actively in the work of the Council, in a spirit of openness, cooperation and dialogue with all partners; will promote the Council as a forum for dialogue on thematic issues on all human rights, and will work to broaden understanding among civilisations, cultures and religions.

The UK will actively consult across the UN membership on the Council's decisions and seek to support states' efforts to implement the Council's recommendations.

The UK will continue to work closely with regional organisations, national human rights institutions and civil society, to support and advance their contributions to the work of the new Council, and will seek their views in advance of major UN human rights meetings.

The UK will contribute actively to reaching agreement on the creation of an effective universal periodic review mechanism for the Human Rights Council.

2) Commitment to support UN bodies

The UK will maintain its institutional support to the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) over the next three years including through over £2.5 million annually in un-earmarked funds, giving OHCHR full independence to decide how to use those funds to meet their mandate.

The UK will maintain its standing invitation to all Special Procedures to visit the UK, and will continue to cooperate fully with them. The UK will work to maintain its record of submitting full and timely reports to Treaty Monitoring Bodies.

The UK plans to contribute over £400 million over the next two years (2006-2008) in institutional support to UN bodies, including those that have a key role in protection and promotion of human rights, for example the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Democracy Fund and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

3) Commitment to advance human rights internationally

The UK will continue to encourage governments around the world to ratify the UN human rights treaties and, through its development and other assistance programmes, to help them abide by the obligations that those treaties place on states.

The UK will continue to support country-led development strategies, and to work with partners to integrate human rights principles of participation, inclusion and accountability into development. The UK will continue to provide technical and financial assistance to states to build the capacity of their security and justice systems, with over £225 million currently committed to security and justice sector programmes in developing countries.

The UK will continue to be at the forefront of new approaches to human rights issues, such as:

as the third country to have ratified the Optional Protocol on the Convention Against Torture, the UK is already preparing to establish its National Preventative Mechanism before the Protocol comes into force. The UK stands ready to share its experience of creating a national preventative mechanism with other states working towards the same goal.

the UK will continue to take a lead in international efforts to advance the issue of corporate responsibility and human rights in consultation with all stakeholders, consistent with our role in leading UN negotiations to establish a Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and through initiatives such as the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights.

the UK will continue to support international processes to advance gender equality, including implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The UK will support the UN to strengthen its ability to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. We remain committed to the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and will take this forward through our National Action Plan.

The UK will continue to support the negotiations for a new UN Convention on disability rights, including the active involvement of civil society in the process.

The UK will maintain its efforts to counter the devastating effects of HIV-AIDS in many parts of the world, and to improve the promotion and protection of the rights of those affected. The UK's strategy for accelerated action on HIV-AIDS promises increased resources of £1.5 billion over three years from 2005-2007.

The UK recognises that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. The UK will maintain its aim to eliminate poverty in developing countries, in particular through achievement by 2015 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The UK's support for the achievement of the MDGs can contribute to the realisation of human rights, such as the achievement of universal primary education (MDG 2), the promotion of gender equality (MDG 3), and the reduction of child mortality (MDG 4). We will continue to tackle exclusion and discrimination through our development programmes, and promote equal rights for all.

4) Commitment to uphold human rights standards at home

The UK will continue to strive for the highest standards in promotion and protection of human rights. To this end, it will work to maintain full implementation of its international obligations under the UN Covenants, Conventions and Optional Protocols to which it is party.

The UK will continue to aim to improve the promotion and protection of the human rights of all its citizens. This will include through initiatives such as the

Discrimination Law Review, which is currently reviewing all aspects of domestic discrimination and equality legislation with the aim of consolidating it into a single comprehensive Equality Act before 2009. We will continue to implement National Strategies to increase race equality and community cohesion in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in accordance with commitments undertaken at the 2001 Durban World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

The UK will continue to aim for the constant improvement of mechanisms and procedures to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens. As part of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission was formally established in March 1999. A new National Human Rights Institution for Great Britain is also being established in the form of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. This Commission will be based on three core pillars – equality, human rights and good relations, working towards fairness throughout our society by removing unfair barriers and extending opportunities to all. Similarly, legislation has been introduced to the Scottish Parliament to create a new human rights body for Scotland.

The UK will continue to protect the rights of disabled people. We have already extended our extensive Disability Discrimination legislation and we have a clear aim that by 2025, disabled people should have the full opportunities and choices necessary to improve their quality of life. We are focusing our strategy on promoting independent living – giving disabled people choice, empowerment and freedom. To make this a reality, in December 2005 we established an Office for Disability Issues which will develop and drive a cross government strategy to deliver equality for disabled people. We will work closer with disabled people and their organisations and ensure that they have a voice at the heart of policy- and decision-making by setting up a National Forum to engage directly with government, and we will pilot and promote new ways of improving service delivery to disabled people to support their independence and choice.

The UK will continue to foster a culture of transparency, openness and dialogue in its pursuit of improved human rights standards. The UK Government will continue to invite the contribution of NGOs, and will maintain dialogue on its human rights work, including with Parliament and civil society.

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Note verbale dated 4 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretariat and has the honour to inform it that France has decided to put forward its candidacy for membership of the Human Rights Council during the election to be held on 9 May 2006.

06-31612 (E) 250406 270406

Annex to the note verbale dated 4 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

Candidacy of France for election to the Human Rights Council (New York, 9 May 2006)

Human rights form part of the core values of the French Republic. Respect for those rights is central to the exercise of democracy in France today and to the commitments we have undertaken within the European Union.

France, which has contributed to the work of the Commission on Human Rights since its establishment, is particularly committed to the international system for the promotion and protection of human rights. It has submitted to the Commission on Human Rights resolutions on arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and extreme poverty, which have been adopted by consensus, and has contributed to the strengthening of international law by presiding over the negotiations on the draft international convention for the protection of all persons from enforced disappearance.

France is committed to the establishment of the Human Rights Council as well as to strengthening the authority and resources of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to mainstreaming human rights into the entire United Nations system.

France has ratified the main international human rights instruments and recognizes the competence of the treaty bodies to receive individual complaints.

The United Nations special procedures have a standing invitation to visit French territory. In 2005, for instance, France hosted the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and the Chairperson of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Furthermore, as a member of the Council of Europe and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), France receives visits from the regional mechanisms for the protection of human rights and is subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

France promotes dialogue and cooperation in the field of human rights. In keeping with its understanding that human rights are universal, France advocates an inclusive vision of human rights, in which engagement prevails over isolation. It will continue to increase its voluntary contributions to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which already stand at 2.15 million euros, in order to facilitate technical assistance, which must be one of the strengths of the new Human Rights Council.

In keeping with its vision of the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, and with its desire for equitable and regulated globalization, France is committed to the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights. In particular, it supported the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which was adopted on 20 October 2005 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the draft declaration on bioethics and human rights.

France attaches particular importance to the realization of the right to development. Its commitment can be illustrated, in particular, by the partnerships for joint development and the cooperation agreements it has concluded with countries around the world. Together with several partners, it has also proposed the implementation of innovative mechanisms for development financing. It will continue to promote the broadest possible adoption of initiatives such as the international solidarity contribution on airline tickets.

1. **France pledges to contribute to the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Human Rights Council:**

- France undertakes to cooperate fully with the Human Rights Council and with all United Nations investigation mechanisms and to submit to the universal periodic review in order to promote a universal and equitable approach to the work of the Council.
- France undertakes to promote the activities, defend the independence and strengthen the role of the special procedures, the treaty bodies and all human rights monitoring and investigation mechanisms.
- France undertakes to work to guarantee and strengthen the right of non-governmental organizations and national human rights bodies to address the Human Rights Council.
- At the national level, it will continue to endeavour to implement the recommendations of the special procedures and the treaty bodies by working to improve conditions of detention, the effectiveness of criminal procedures and anti-discrimination policy.
- France is committed to ensuring that the Human Rights Council protects all rights. It will continue to support the drafting process for an optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of those rights and strengthening the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises.
- It will ensure that a gender and equality perspective is mainstreamed into all work undertaken by the Human Rights Council.

2. **France pledges to promote respect for international law and human life at all times:**

Reaffirming its commitment to respect for human rights while countering terrorism, the rejection of secret detention, and the absolute prohibition of the use of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment,

- France will continue to take action against arbitrary detention within the framework of the Council.
- It will promote the draft international convention for the protection of all persons from enforced disappearance with a view to its adoption. France will subsequently campaign for the signature and ratification of the convention. It undertakes to ratify the convention in the year following its adoption.

- During its term, France will ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

- By 2007, it will double its contribution to the United Nations Fund for Victims of Torture.

- France will pursue the campaign for the universal abolition of the death penalty. It will host the World Congress against the Death Penalty in Paris in February 2007.

3. **France pledges to support the victims of human rights violations:**

- It will continue to work for the recognition of the right to the truth and the right to reparation for victims of human rights violations.

- France is committed to fighting against impunity for the perpetrators of human rights violations and, as such, will make particular efforts to promote international criminal justice and the role of the International Criminal Court. It undertakes to disseminate as widely as possible the guiding principles of the United Nations on the fight against impunity.

- France will pursue sustained dialogue with human rights defenders in France and around the world and will continue to support their initiatives, the strengthening of protection for human rights defenders under threat and the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights defenders.

- France pays particular attention to child victims of human rights violations and strongly condemns all forms of violence and discrimination against them. Within the Security Council working group which it currently chairs, it will pursue its commitment to combating the use of children in armed conflicts. Together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), it will host in Paris in 2006 an international conference to complete the review of the principles for the prevention of recruitment, demobilization and the reintegration of children affected by armed conflict.

4. **France pledges to support initiatives designed to combat all forms of discrimination:**

- France will continue to work to ensure respect for all of the fundamental rights of women, the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against them, the representation of women in decision-making bodies and the recognition of their role in conflict prevention. It will lift several of its reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

- France wishes to promote dialogue among cultures and civilizations and to foster a spirit of tolerance and respect for individual freedoms. It supports initiatives such as the educational programme designed to prevent racial discrimination and genocide.

- In accordance with the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, it has established a High Authority to Combat Discrimination and Promote Equal Opportunities in France.

- France will work to promote the adoption of the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. In 2006-2007 it will host a visit by the Special Rapporteur on that question.

- France will work to ensure the early and successful conclusion of the negotiations on the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities in order to reaffirm the comprehensive nature of the rights enjoyed by all persons, regardless of any disabilities they may have.

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Agenda item 112 (e)
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 4 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly and has the honour to inform him that Canada has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council at elections to be held during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, on 9 May 2006.

Canada has a longstanding commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which it has demonstrated through its active involvement in and support for United Nations human rights bodies, including the Commission on Human Rights, its bilateral relations, its development assistance programmes designed to strengthen capacity in human rights, and its ratification and implementation of international human rights treaties.

In accordance with resolution 60/251, the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations will shortly submit to all Permanent Missions a more detailed document outlining Canada's continuing commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, including how it intends to contribute to the work of the Human Rights Council.

The Government of Canada attaches great importance to the mandate and objectives of the new Human Rights Council and looks forward to contributing in a constructive manner to their fulfilment.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 4 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly and, following its note dated 4 April 2006, announcing Canada's candidacy to the Human Rights Council, and in accordance with resolution 60/251, has the honour to enclose herewith a document detailing Canada's contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and its voluntary pledges and commitments made thereto (see enclosure).

The Government of Canada is committed to making a positive contribution to ensuring that the Human Rights Council becomes an effective body for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Enclosure

Human Rights Council

Canada's commitments and pledges

The promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of Canada's foreign and domestic policy. Canada is a strong supporter of the United Nations human rights system.

Canada's engagement with the Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council will be at the heart of the United Nations human rights architecture and thus, Canada pledges:

- To work with all stakeholders to put in place an efficient and effective Human Rights Council that builds on the strengths and lessons learned of the Commission on Human Rights
- To give effect to the Council's mandate to promote and protect human rights, including by responding appropriately to human rights violations, by contributing to its work on norm development, and by encouraging cooperation and dialogue
- To engage with all United Nations Member States to find new and creative ways to ensure that the Council's work has a direct, concrete and positive impact on the promotion and protection of the rights of people around the world
- To participate constructively in the mandate review process and in developing modalities of a universal periodic review mechanism, and to submit itself to periodic review
- To ensure that the Council benefits from the involvement and contributions of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and national institutions
- To work with all stakeholders for a system of special procedures, which is essential for the Council's emphasis on the implementation of human rights obligations
- To re-extend its open invitation to special procedures to visit Canada.

In 1999, Canada was one of the first countries to give an open invitation to special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights. Since that time, the Special Rapporteurs on toxic waste, the rights of migrants, indigenous peoples, racism, the right to health and, most recently in 2005, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention have made official visits.

Canada was re-elected to the Commission on Human Rights for the 2005-2007 term. During its tenures, Canada played a leadership role in the establishment and implementation of norms and standards on key human rights issues including the rights of indigenous peoples, violence against women, freedom of expression, mass exoduses, the work of treaty bodies, as well as rights of the child.

Canada has also taken a leadership role in the fight against impunity, including by becoming a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and strongly supporting various international and hybrid criminal tribunals. Its commitment to international humanitarian law and the protection of refugees is unwavering.

Support for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and international cooperation

Canada's strong support to the important work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was reaffirmed recently when we increased our unearmarked funding for the Office, making Canada one of the top donors. We have also supported efforts to double the funds available to the Office from the United Nations regular budget. Canada pledges:

- To provide the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with additional unearmarked contributions for its work

- To pursue international cooperation programmes on human rights, gender equality, child protection, democracy, good governance, and the rule of law — this, in response to the interest expressed by many States for dialogue and cooperation.

Canada and United Nations human rights instruments

Canada has ratified key United Nations human rights instruments: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on children in armed conflict. As well, Canada recently ratified the Second Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at the abolition of the death penalty and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sexual exploitation and sale of children. Canada has agreed to the jurisdiction of the individual complaint mechanisms established by the First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Canada is one of only six States that is fully up to date in its reporting to the treaty bodies and, by May 2006, Canada will have presented its reports before all six of these Committees in the past four years. Consultation mechanisms are in place to ensure that federal, provincial and territorial governments are aware of, and give serious consideration to, the recommendations of treaty bodies, and further, that such recommendations are available to Canadians.

As regards United Nations human rights instruments, Canada pledges:

- To submit its reports to the treaty bodies in a timely fashion and to participate in meaningful dialogue with the treaty body members

- To work with the treaty bodies and key stakeholders on the renewal and reform of the United Nations treaty body system

- To consider signing or ratifying other human rights instruments, such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

Human rights in Canada

At the domestic level, human rights and gender equality are promoted and protected through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. At the federal, provincial and territorial levels, there are also human rights codes and human rights bodies, such as the Canadian Human Rights Commission, which play a key role in furthering equality rights in Canada.

Canada has a vigorous civil society, which plays an important role in the promotion of human rights, both at the national and international level. The government and civil society engage on a range of issues relating to human rights, in a spirit of cooperation and dialogue.

All governments in Canada carry out public education programmes in the area of human rights, including through formal education curricula.

On the basis of this solid institutional and legislative background, Canada commits itself to actively pursue the implementation of human rights domestically, including with respect to racism, indigenous people and the protection of children.